



The Prospective Relationship of Attachment Theory and Dispositional Forgiveness: An Exploration of a Somali Population in the United States

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Abstract:

Background: Attachment theory can be a valuable tool in understanding the differences in the propensity to forgive hurt. Attachment theory has been associated with the ability to forgive or respond to hurt. Both concepts involve trust, communication, empathy, and emotion regulation. This article examines the relationship between attachment style and dispositional forgiveness among a population of Somalis in the United States.

Method: Fifty Somalis at the Somalis Community Association in Columbus, Ohio, participated in the study. Forgiveness was conceptualized utilizing Enright Forgiveness Inventory (Enright et al., 2000), while attachment style was measured using the Relationship Scale Questionnaire (RSQ), 30-item statements describing characteristic styles of close relationships. Further, descriptive statistics and frequencies were run to get an overview of the sample. Data were entered into the SPSS 17.0 and analyzed using an alpha level set at 0.05. Correlation coefficients were run to determine the association between forgiveness and the various types of attachment styles.

Result: The result of this study indicates that there was no significant relationship between attachment style and dispositional forgiveness among the Somalian community in Columbus, Ohio. Discussions of the results, as well as a consideration of potential future directions, are explored.

Conclusion: In a close-knit, communal, and homogenous Somalis group, where family and community are considered more important than the individual, forgiveness may be more related to variables such as family and group harmony than internal personality variables.

Keywords: Attachment styles, Attachment theory, Dispositional forgiveness, Somalis

1. INTRODUCTION

Attachment theory hypothesizes that infants have a universal need to attach to their primary caregivers when distressed and in need of care. The secure relationship between a primary caregiver and an infant is essential for enhancing the infant's chance of survival (Bowlby, 1969) and critical to the long-term mental and physical health of an infant (Levine & Heller, 2011). As a behavioral system, attachment is essential to human behavior throughout a person's life (Levine & Heller, 2011). It enables the infant to develop the trust, industry, autonomy, and implicit knowledge to deal with the threats to self that often accompany an identity formation process (Lapsley, Rice & FitzGerald, 1990), especially in relationships with others. Research on individual differences in adult attachment processes has provided the basis for exploring the relationship between attachment styles and the propensity to forgive (Burnette, Taylor, Worthington, & Forsyth, 2007). Studies have shown that securely attached individuals are more likely to remain in a relationship and work through conflicts, potentially leading to forgiveness (Lawler-Row, Younger, Piferi, & Jones, 2006). This assertion about healthy attachment style as a conceptualization of individual propensity to forgive can provide some insights into the potential of examining forgiveness through the lenses of attachment styles.

1.1. Attachment Theory

The evolution of attachment theory began in the 1930s with John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth as pioneers.¹ Though the concept of infant-mother relationships has always existed, Bowlby and Ainsworth developed it to its current level of knowledge (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). Bowlby has always been interested in the effect of mother-child relationships on later personality development. He became more interested in attachment theory because he was dissatisfied with existing theories of infant-mother relationships. Initially, Bowlby studied Freudians, who postulated that the child's attachment to the caregiver resulted from the motivation the child learned through feeding and sexual gratification. This psychoanalytic explanation for early bonding inspired Bowlby, especially as he became aware of Ann Freud's observation of young children who were separated from their families and significant others during World War II. Though the psychoanalytic concept inspired Bowlby, he rejected the idea that mother-child bonding resulted from feeding and sexual gratification (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991).

Bowlby's interest in attachment theory increased when he volunteered to work at the London Child Guidance Clinic. His experience treating maladjusted children led him to consider the child-mother relationship and how it may impact cognitive, social, and emotional development. At London Child Guidance Clinic, Bowlby met two young men who caught his attention (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). He noticed that one of them was an isolated, affectionless adolescent who had never experienced a stable relationship with a mother figure. The other young man was anxious and followed Bowlby everywhere he went. Bowlby's experience at the London Child Guidance Clinic convinced and strengthened his belief in the vital role of mother-child interactions in the development of children. He resolved to specialize in child psychiatry and psychotherapy, and his first systematic research was conducted in the London Child Guidance Clinic. The study involved forty-four juvenile thieves matched with a control group. The result of the study showed that prolonged experiences of infant-mother separation or denial of parental care were prevalent among the thieves compared to the control group (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). Bowlby notes that juvenile thieves with poor attachment histories were more unlikely to have sufficient skills to form healthy relationships as adults. This claim resonates with Burnette's *et al.* (2007) assertion that the relationship between an infant and a primary caregiver establishes the archetype for later relationships into adulthood and throughout life; every situation is constructed in terms of this representative model children have of the world and themselves. Slater (2007) agrees with Burnette *et al.* (2007) that attachment style is not just a single relationship among other relationships; it is the very basis of healthy individual development.

While Levine & Heller (2011) agree with Slater (2007) that attachment theory may be stable, they argue that attachment styles can also change. Attachment style may change because people change throughout life and change can happen differently. For example, when an anxious personality encounters a secure personality type in a relationship, the formal attachment style might change. Also, sickness, marriage, achievements, and environment can alter attachment styles (Levine & Heller, 2011). Further, as infants develop into an adult, they are more likely to form an attachment with other substitute figures to meet their basic needs of attachment necessary for the development of their identity (Ainsworth *et al.* 1978; Campbell, Adams, Dobson, 1984).

¹ Attachment theory refers to the important bond between an infant and a caregiver. (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). This bond occurs during the first six months of the child's life and provides the child with emotional security. At this time, the child becomes attached to a caregiver who frequently responds to the child's needs for physical and emotional care. There are various explanations of attachment theory, some of which are very convincing though scientific explanations are unavailable. Also, there is research on attachment theory on animals. As far back as 1935, Konrad Lorenz studied animal attachment theory (Lorenz, K. E. 1935). He observes infant geese imprinting onto their caregivers and forming an attachment. Lorenz concludes that infants are pre-programmed for an attachment from the moment they are born. Lorenz's research provides the basis for understanding attachment theory in animals and the idea that attachment style in infants is inherent. Another researcher, Harry Harlow (1962), explores infants' attachment to caregivers in his research with rhesus monkeys. He observes that the rhesus monkeys clung to a surrogate cloth mother in times of distress as opposed to a surrogate wire mother who provided food. Harlow suggests that attachment provides animals with emotional, and survival needs. Robertson and Bowlby (1952) observed patterns of emotional attachment in human children who exhibited a predictable pattern of distress, anger, and anguish when separated from their mothers.

1.1.1. Type of Attachment Styles

Mary Ainsworth and Barbara Wittig (1969) further developed Bowlby's theory based on observations made among 1-year-old children and their mothers in a laboratory setting. In her study "Strange Situation," Ainsworth observed different attachment styles (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). Ainsworth posited that there are two types of attachment styles, secure and insecure. Adults with a secure attachment style relate more freely and experience more intimacy and autonomy in relationships, while insecure adults show various forms of relational dysfunction (Webb, Call, Chickering, Colburn & Heisler, 2006). Most often, a secure attachment style develops in an environment where the relationship between the child and his or her caregiver is warm and stable (Webb *et al.*, 2006). On the other hand, an insecure attachment style ensues due to an unpredictable, negative, or unstable relationship between a child and his or her caregiver (Lawler-Row *et al.*, 2006). Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall (1978) posit that caregivers who frequently do not attend to children emotionally and rarely engaged in physical contact with them tended to have children who avoided their mothers and tended to be angrier and more anxious.

An infant with a secure attachment style is more likely to approach relationships with trust and comfort. In contrast, an infant with an insecure attachment style will view intimacy with some distrust and uncertainty (Lawler-Row *et al.*, 2006). One form of insecure attachment style is preoccupation with a relationship (Webb *et al.*, 2006). Adults with a preoccupied attachment often feel unworthy and thus seek approval for everything they do with others. The second category of insecure attachment is the fear of intimacy. Fearfully attached individuals often feel rejected and avoid interpersonal relationships. The third type of insecure attachment is the dismissal of intimacy. Adults with a dismissing style of insecure attachment do not feel unworthy; however, they do not value interpersonal relationships (Webb *et al.*, 2006).

In a study of childcare, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) selected 1,000 newborns in different parts of the country. It tracked the progress of these children through different styles of childcare. The NICHD discovered that children with less contact with their primary caregivers were more likely to develop a troublesome personality and an insecure attachment style than infants with frequent, consistent contact with their caregivers (Belsky, 2007). Belsky (2007) concludes that infants raised with continuous attention and unconditional love are more likely to develop a healthier attachment style and have better relationship skills than those children who receive minimal parental care.

Backstrom & Holmes (2000) went a step further to argue that the bonds between mother and child serve many purposes and have some evolutionary connotations. First, this initial attachment maintains proximity between mother and child under threat. Second, it provides a continuous sense of felt security, and third, it forms the basis for future relationships. Bartholomew & Horowitz (1991) assert that the quality of early attachment depends on the extent to which a child is securely bound to his or her caregivers. This trustworthy and reliable relationship with caregivers is the foundation of healthy relationships that enables individuals to experience a basic sense of stability and control in adulthood. The ability to create and maintain healthy relationships depends on many characteristics, including trust and cooperation (Lawler-Row Kathleen, Younger Jarred, Piferi Rachel & Jones, Warren, 2006).

Furthermore, a healthy attachment style is linked to the ability to control negative emotions in relationships. Webb *et al.* (2006) note that a securely attached individual is more likely to deal with relationship distress more constructively than an insecurely attached adult. Attachment style affects the framework in which one relates with others and is also associated with the readiness to forgive (Fearon, Bakermans-kranenburg, Van IJzendoorn, Lapsley & Roisman, 2010).

1.1.2. Forgiveness and Attachment Theory

The study of forgiveness as a therapeutic intervention has increased exponentially in the past twenty years (Worthington, 2005). While forgiveness is historically associated with spirituality and religious tradition (Sandage & Williamson, 2010), forgiveness has been found to impact a person's emotional and psychological well-being (Toussaint & Webb, 2005). Enright and Fitzgibbons (2000) postulate a positive relationship between forgiveness and well-being. Orcutt (2006) corroborates Enright and Fitzgibbon's (2000) assertion that forgiveness and psychological well-being

may be closely linked. Using a sample of 182 college women, Orcutt (2006) examined the relationship between forgiveness with psychological distress symptoms. He observed that forgiveness significantly predicted change in psychological distress symptoms. Less forgiving individuals reported a substantially more significant increase in psychological distress symptoms than those willing to forgive an offense. Thompson, Snyder, Hoffman, Michael, Rasmussen, Billings (2005) agree with Orcutt (2006) that the lower the level of forgiveness, the higher the level of depression, anger, and anxiety. Further, Maltby, Day, and Barber (2005) note that more forgiving individuals can manage psychological stress than unforgiving individuals. Researchers have continued to assert that forgiveness has a positive effect on psychological well-being (Paloutzian & Park, 2005, p.405).

Further, using 221 undergraduate students, Burnette, Davis, Green, Worthington, & Bradfield (2009) examined the associations between attachment, empathy, rumination, forgiveness, and depressive symptoms through the framework of attachment theory. Burnette et al. observe a close correlation between insecure attachment and unforgiving responses to offenses.

Unlike forgiveness, unforgiveness has been associated with some debilitating effects on the wellness of an individual. Worthington and Scherer (2004) describe unforgiveness as a type of stress response that directly impacts a person's mental health and psychology. Hart & Budd (2011) depict unforgiveness as a factor that could cause interference with a person's daily routine by draining one's energy and hindering a happy day-by-day existence. In other words, unforgiveness could cause one to feel "down in the dumps," which may result in a bombardment of emotions such as pain, frustration, and anger.

Unforgiveness is associated with some health risks. According to Worthington, one of the significant consequences of unforgiveness is the commitment to being emotionally miserable (Worthington, 1998, p.98). When a person "holds fast" to grudges, that person is bound to suffer from the perpetual effects of anger. Unforgiveness results in different forms of stress hormones in the bloodstream and other brain chemistry, which affects biological processes, including the functioning of the immune system (Witvliet *et al.*, 2001). Also, unforgiveness is connected with chronic anger and hurt, linked to cardiovascular difficulty, high blood pressure issues, and chronic stress that could cause a brain hemorrhage (Witvliet *et al.*, 2001). For example, studies have shown that an unforgiving person's thoughts are associated with an increase in cardiovascular arousal (Lawler et al., 2003; Witvliet et al., 2001) and cause an increase in cortisol secretion (Berry & Worthington, 2001). Seybold, Hill, Neumann, & Chi, (2001) liken the negative impacts of unforgiveness to those of interpersonal mental trauma. When a traumatized human brain goes into a hyperactive state, it could result to hormonal imbalance.

In a study, Witvliet *et al.* (2001) conducted a demonstration with a group of undergraduate students to examine the relationship between unforgiveness and psychological well-being. A group of students was asked to participate in four types of thinking regarding a specific offense they had incurred. Group one was exposed to thoughts about holding grudges; the second group to thoughts about revenge; the third group to empathic thoughts about the offender; and the fourth group to forgiving thoughts. Witvliet *et al.* (2001) found that those who engaged in grudge and vengeful feelings showed an increase in facial tension, skin conductance, heart rate, and high blood pressure compared to students who engaged in empathic or forgiving feelings toward their offenders. Witvliet *et al.* (2001) concluded that there might be a correlation between forgiveness and psychological health.

Unforgiveness does have not only an impact on the psychological well-being of an individual but also the social and cognitive behavior of a person (Witvliet, Ludwig, & Bauer, 2002). For example, unforgiveness in a workplace could have deleterious effects such as increased absenteeism, increased stress withdrawal from the organizational life, reduction in cooperative behavior, and increased aggression (Giebels and Janssen 2005, De Dreu 2008, , Cropanzano et al., 2001, Skarlicki and Folger, 1997). Further, due to unforgiveness, many lives have been lost in genocide, war, and intertribal ethnic conflict (Hart & Budd, 2011).

In addition, unforgiveness can hinder success, initiative, and progress in workplaces, schools, churches, and organizations (Hart & Budd, 2011). Forgiveness is key to all forms of relationships. A relationship that lacks forgiveness will disintegrate with little or no chance of survival. Suwartono, Prawasti, & Mullet (2007) add that how people respond to hurt (forgiveness or forgiveness) may shape family, institutions, and international relationships.

1.1.3. The Dimensions and Process of Forgiveness

In order to understand the process of forgiveness, two dimensions of forgiveness are important, intrapsychic and interpsychic. Forgiveness is intrapsychic because it takes place within a person and involves the state and process inside the mind of the offended. The intrapsychic dimension of forgiveness affects the cognitive process that ruminates or forgives offenses (Worthington, 1998, p.143). On the other hand, the interpsychic dimension of forgiveness happens between persons; it is a step toward restoring relationships. Forgiveness is personal and interpersonal; it takes place essentially in one's mind or can be an agreement between two persons. The two dimensions of forgiveness are independent; one can happen without the other, or both can co-occur. These two dimensions of forgiveness are fundamental to the process of forgiveness since forgiveness is only possible when there is a change in the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of the offended (Worthington, 1998, p.86). Dispositional traits are considered to impact forgiveness by shaping the way a person interprets their perceptions of the transgressor, experienced betrayals and the quality of the relationship (McCullough & Hoyt, 2002).

Scholars differ in their definition of forgives. Subkoviak (1995) defines forgiveness as a process in which one overcomes resentment toward an offender. This implies that forgiveness is not automatic; it is not a one-time event. Forgiveness is a gradual internal release of hurt from anger, pain, and the clutch of emotions that keeps one stuck (Hart & Budd, 2011). In so doing, the offended tries to have a new stance of kindness, compassion, and even love toward the offender, even though the offender has no moral right to such a forgiving response (Subkoviak, 1995). Forgiveness is the desire to reduce avoidance of, withdrawal from, and anger revenge-retaliation against the person by whom one has been hurt and to increase conciliation toward that person (Lawler-Row, Karremans, Scott, Edlis-Matityahou, & Edward, 2008). This is because, in a hurtful situation, people have three options: to deny the hurt, acknowledge the hurt and move on, or forgive even before one is ready to do so (Hart & Budd, 2011). Forgiveness implies letting go or voluntarily giving up an urge to be spiteful or "payback." Research has revealed that forgiveness encourages constructive behaviors, good health, and restored affection (Burnette *et al.*, 2007). However, despite the positive benefits associated with forgiveness, some individuals have difficulty pardoning their offenders (Finke, Burnette, & Scissors, 2007). Less forgiving people are more inclined to be angry and anxious than those who can readily forgive.

While scholars differ in their definitions of forgiveness, most agree with Enright & Coyle (1988) that forgiveness differs from pardoning, condoning, excusing, forgetting, and reconciling. Orcutt (2006) notes that *pardoning* involves using specific legal terms while *condoning* requires justification of the offense. *Excusing* implies that a transgression was committed but was justified by the circumstances. *Forgetting* entails that the memory of the crime has decayed or is no longer in consciousness, and *reconciling* involves restoring the damaged relationship. Scholars also agree that forgiveness should be distinguished from related concepts such as reconciliation. Worthington & Drunkard (2000) point out that "the restoration of trust in an interpersonal relationship through mutually trustworthy behaviors" is not a condition for forgiveness. People can forgive their offenders but choose not to continue with the relationship (Paloutzian & Park, 2005, p.405).

1.2. The Somalis

Somalia is situated in East Africa, with a population of about 8 million people. The country is a long narrow country that wraps around the Horn of Africa and the longest coast of any African nation. It borders on the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. The northern part of Somalia receives less rainfall than the southern part (Lewis, 2008). Unlike other African countries, Somalia is composed of a homogeneous ethnic group. Somalia nation consists of six divisions which are, to some extent, geographically distinct. However, they share a common language, religion, and culture, and most importantly, Somalis have a common ancestral heritage. Ethnically, Somalis belong to the Cushitic-speaking Family, and they are known as one of Africa's largest ethnic groups (Lewis, 2008).

Majority of Somalis are Muslim, and religion is very important to them. Somalis experienced a conversion to Islam at an early stage and remained committed to that belief. They have a long tradition of sharing history with those in the Arabian Peninsula, and it is no surprise that Somalis trace

their descent to Arab ancestors connected to the family of the prophet. Muhammad. This connection is evident even today in Somali's membership in the Arab league, and it is not surprising that Arabic is a second common language.

Culturally, most Somalis belong to a nomadic pastoral culture of herding camels, goats, and cattle (Lewis, 2008). Though most Somalis are nomadic or have a nomadic affiliation, many today live in the urban centers all or part of the time (Lewis, 2008). The main occupations of those living in urban areas are commerce and fisheries (Lewis, 2008). The Somalis are traditionally polygamous, marrying according to the Islamic code. It is acceptable in this culture to marry one's first cousin (Lewis, 2008). According to the Somalian tradition, practicing Muslims must marry four wives (Lewis, 2008). Most men will probably have at least two wives at some point in their lives, and wealthy men will likely have four or more. Marriage is extremely unstable because of the high frequency of divorce (Lewis, 2008).

The primary aim of marriage is to "produce" children, especially male children, who will act as the family's heirs. Each wife and her children form a separate socio-economic unit with their dwelling and small stock (Lewis, 2008). The first wife is often the head of the other wives and keeps the accounts' treasury (Lewis, 2008). If the husband is rich, his land and property will be divided among the wives and children; if not, all wives and children will work on the same land area and later share the produce. The men tend to favor the youngest and the most beautiful wife. This often brings jealousy and friction to the wives and their children. In terms of labor, women are assigned to care for sheep and goats. Usually, the men deal with grazing and tending the camels. This chauvinistic attitude is attributed to the fact that women need to be protected from harm in the field, stressing the vulnerability of women and the need to preserve their chastity.

Somalis, a close-knit, communal, and homogenous society, have an authoritarian parenting style (Ember Melvin & Ember Carol, 2001). Their children are raised with deep love coupled with stern discipline. The communal lifestyle among the Somalis encourages mother-child bonding. Somalian mothers maintain close contact with their children throughout the day; for example, it is common to breastfeed a child until two years of age. Also, mothers carry their babies on their backs, cuddle them frequently, and often share the same bed with the baby (Ember *et al.*, 2001).

There is a plethora of studies on forgiveness in specific cultures and contexts. An example is Sandage and Williamson's (2005) research on the effect of context and culture on forgiveness. Further, Hong, Watkins & Hui (2004) explored the nature and practice of forgiveness among Chinese. Fukuno & Ohbuchi (1998) examined the concept of forgiveness in Japanese adults, and Watkins, Hui, Luo, Regmi, Worthington; Hook & Davis (2011) investigated forgiveness and interpersonal relationship among Nepalese. While there are studies of forgiveness in different culture and context, not many studies have explored the relationship between attachment theory and forgiveness in specific culture and context. The present study explores the relationship between attachment style and forgiveness in the Somalian culture for two reasons. First, family is extremely important in the Somali community. Family is considered more important than the individual in all aspects of life. It is not surprising that most Somalis live with their parents until they get married. Second, religion is essential, especially the knowledge of the Qur'an. Family and religion are two lenses through which Somalis view their daily life (Ember *et al.*, 2001). The study predicted that the close-knit, collective Somalian relationships would foster a healthy attachment style which would indicate a tendency to forgive transgressions on the psychometric test, Relationships Scale Questionnaire (RSQ), and the Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI) scale. The strong sense of close-knit families, the foundation for setting values among the Somalis, makes a secure attachment style more likely in the Somalian culture.

2. METHODS

Fifty Somalis at the Somalis Community Association in Columbus, Ohio, participated in the study. The president of the Somalis Community Association in Columbus, Ohio, contacted the participants and sent surveys via email. Participation was voluntary, and there was no compensation. The Enright Forgiveness Inventory (Enright *et al.*, 2000) and the Relationship Scale Questionnaire were administered using SurveyMonkey. The Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI) included the topics of Positive Affect, Behavior, and Cognition. Participants were asked to complete surveys online and submit their responses. Participation was anonymous. The sampling method was selected for two reasons: to foster anonymous responses and avoid bias in computing the results.

Email notices were sent to participants explaining the three parts of the Enright Forgiveness Inventory Questionnaire. Participants were informed that questions would be asked of them to rate their present feelings concerning a negative event or an offense that happened in the past. The value of participants' opinions and cooperation was emphasized to ensure the study's accurate completion. There was at least one phone call and one email sent out every week for three months to the president of the Somalis Association as a reminder to encourage the participants to complete the survey. There were about twelve emails, twelve phone calls, and many personal visits to the Somali Center.

2.1. Measurements

The following questionnaires were sent to each participant: the Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI), a 60-item Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree) items (Enright et al., 200), and the Relationship Scale Questionnaire, 30-item statements describing characteristic styles of close relationships (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994). Attachment style was measured using the Relationship Scale Questionnaire (RSQ), 30-item statements describing characteristic styles of close relationships. On a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not at all like me) to 5 (very much like me), each participant was rated on how well each statement described their relationship style (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994).

Dispositional Forgiveness was measured using The Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI), a self-report measure designed to assess the degree to which individuals forgave those who had hurt them deeply (Enright et al., 200). The EFI is a 60-item Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree) items (Enright *et al.*, 200). Each of the sixty items is divided into three subscales: Affect, Behavior, and Cognition, and consists of a word or short phrase describing the participant's feelings, thoughts, and behaviors concerning the offender (Enright et al., 200). The first part of the subscale consists of questions that address the recent experience in which the participant was unjustly treated and deeply hurt by the offender. The second part contains the major EFI items, which pertain to the negative and positive feelings, plus the behaviors and thoughts about the offender. In the final part of the subscale, the participant was asked to respond to a pseudo-forgiveness scale in order to determine if they were in denial or justifying injury (Enright et al., 200). During the assessment of EFI scores, only the items in Part Two are used (Enright et al., 200). The cognition section on the forgiveness scale was not correctly administered; seven questions could not be used because they were wrongly coded.

2.1.1. Analysis and Scoring

Descriptive statistics and frequencies were run to get an overview of the sample. Data were entered into the SPSS 17.0 and analyzed using an alpha level set at 0.05. Correlation coefficients were run to determine the association between Forgiveness and the various attachment styles. In addition, median splits were used to categorize those above the median as high scorers and those below the median as low scorers on the attachment subscales. Furthermore, independent t-tests were run to compare the low and high scorers for secure, preoccupied, fearful, and dismissing attachment subscales on mean scores of Forgiveness.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Secure Attachment

Twenty-nine subjects completed the secure attachment subscale with a median score of 17. Figure 1 on page 12 illustrates that there was not a significant correlation between the Secure attachment subscale and Forgiveness, $r(15) = -0.313, p > .05$. When subjects were divided into two groups, High Secure Attachment (17 or higher) and Low Secure Attachment (16 or lower), there was not a significant difference between the High group ($N = 14, M = 194.86, SD = 53.37$) and Low group ($N = 1, EFI = 275$) on the EFI, $t(13) = 0.17, p > .05$. Interestingly, the subjects who scored low on the secure attachment subscale were significantly less likely to give a complete response on the Forgiveness questionnaire (1 out of 13 subjects) than the subjects who scored high on the secure attachment subscale (14 out of 15 subjects), $\chi^2(1) = 21.52, p < .05$.

3.2. Fearful Attachment

Forty-seven subjects completed the Fearful attachment subscale with a median score of 11. Figure 2 on page 13 shows that there was not a significant correlation between the Fearful attachment subscale and Forgiveness, $r(24) = -0.057, p > .05$. When subjects were divided into two groups, High Fearful Attachment (11 or higher) and Low Fearful Attachment (10 or lower), there was not a significant difference between the High group ($N = 14, M = 200.43, SD = 58.4$) and Low group ($N = 10, M = 212.9, SD = 58.4$) on the EFI, $t(22) = 0.523, p > .05$.

3.3. Dismissing Attachment

Forty-five subjects completed the Dismissing attachment subscale with a median score of 18. Figure 3 on page 14 indicates that there was not a significant correlation between the Dismissing attachment subscale and Forgiveness, $r(22) = -0.202, p > .05$. When subjects were divided into two groups, High Dismissing Attachment (18 or higher) and Low Dismissing Attachment (17 or lower), there was not a significant difference between the High group ($N = 14, M = 198.00, SD = 63.2$) and the Low group ($N = 8, M = 213.37, SD = 49.08$) on the EFI, $t(20) = 0.591, p > .05$.

3.4. Preoccupied Attachment

Twenty-seven subjects completed the Preoccupied attachment subscale with a median score of 12. Figure 4 on page 15 demonstrates that there was not a significant correlation between the Preoccupied attachment subscale and Forgiveness, $r(13) = -0.181, p > .05$. When subjects were divided into two groups, High Preoccupied Attachment (12 or higher) and Low Preoccupied Attachment (11 or lower), there was not a significant difference between the High group ($N = 8, M = 200.37, SD = 55.52$) and the Low group ($N = 5, M = 225.6, SD = 55.0$) on the EFI, $t(11) = 0.800, p > 0.877$.

4. DISCUSSION

The primary research question for this paper addresses the effects of attachment style on individual willingness to forgive in the Somalian community. Attachment styles were measured using the Relationship Questionnaire Scale (RQS), which described each of the four attachment styles: secure, fearful, preoccupied, and dismissing. On a 7-point Likert-Type scale, ranging from 1(not at all like me) to 7(very much like me), each participant rated how well each of the four paragraphs described his or her relationship style. Dispositional Forgiveness was measured using The Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI), a self-report measure designed to assess the degree to which individuals forgave those who hurt them deeply (Enright et al., 200). The EFI is a 60-item Likert-type scale ranging from 1(Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree) items (Enright et al., 200). Securely attached subjects did not report traits of dispositional Forgiveness differently from insecurely attached subjects.

The result of this study indicates that there was no relationship between attachment style and dispositional Forgiveness in the Somalian community. This implies that subjects with a secure attachment style were not more likely to regulate their emotions, manage stress in relationships, and possess a willingness to forgive as predicted. Also, the idea that a consistent experience of soothing, protecting, nurturing, and attentive response by a caregiver allows a child to internalize a sense of safety, which in turn becomes a secure base by which the child can confidently relate with others (Zilberstein, K., Messer, 2010) does not hold for this study. Attachment style develops early in childhood and has lasting effects on the child's emotional regulation and the relationship he or she later forms in adulthood (Zilberstein, 2010). However, this prediction was not realized in this study.

4.1. Limitations

The present study has several limitations. First, the exclusive use of a singular sample of the Somalis limits the ability to generalize this finding and apply it to other populations. Second, the sample size was small and was not randomized. Attachment style was measured with an unsophisticated instrument. When a study includes subjective responses, the result may be skewed. Though most Somalis have close-kin relationships, that fact is not true of all Somalis.

Furthermore, even though there was 100 percent participation, many subjects left many responses blank. The fifty Somalian men and women who participated are currently far from their natural homes. They may have been influenced by the many changes during their transition to an American

lifestyle. Their experiences and realizations during this period may have affected their responses in this study. The cognition section on the Forgiveness scale was not correctly administered; seven questions were not used because they were wrongly coded.

4.1.1. Future Studies

In the future, it will be interesting to investigate why participants who scored higher on secure attachment completed more of the questionnaires compared to participants who scored lower on insecure attachment. In addition, studies will benefit from exploring Forgiveness in terms of gender differences. Some people may think that women are more likely to forgive as soon as a conflict begins than men, who usually ponder initially. Furthermore, this present study does not indicate an age limit. Therefore, it will be important to explore attachment style and dispositional Forgiveness to age maturation. Zilberstein (2010) asserts that older adults may have a better capacity to regulate emotions than younger adults. Hence, older adults may have sufficient cognition maturation, which would allow effective skills to be acquired in managing emotions and the ability to forgive. It would be of particular interest to explore the attachment style and Forgiveness in relation to the magnitude or severity of an offense. Also, it would be helpful to know how attachment styles are externalized and maintained regarding emotional regulation and the ability to forgive (Zilberstein, 2010). In addition, a longitudinal study would also be helpful in learning more about how attachment style affects the willingness to forgive.

The study predicted that the close-knit Somalian relationship would foster a healthy attachment style, indicating a tendency to forgive transgressions on the psychometric test, Relationships Scale Questionnaires (RSQ), and the Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI) scale. However, this prediction was not realized in this study. Attachment theory does not correspond with an individual willingness to forgive among a population of Somalis in the United States.

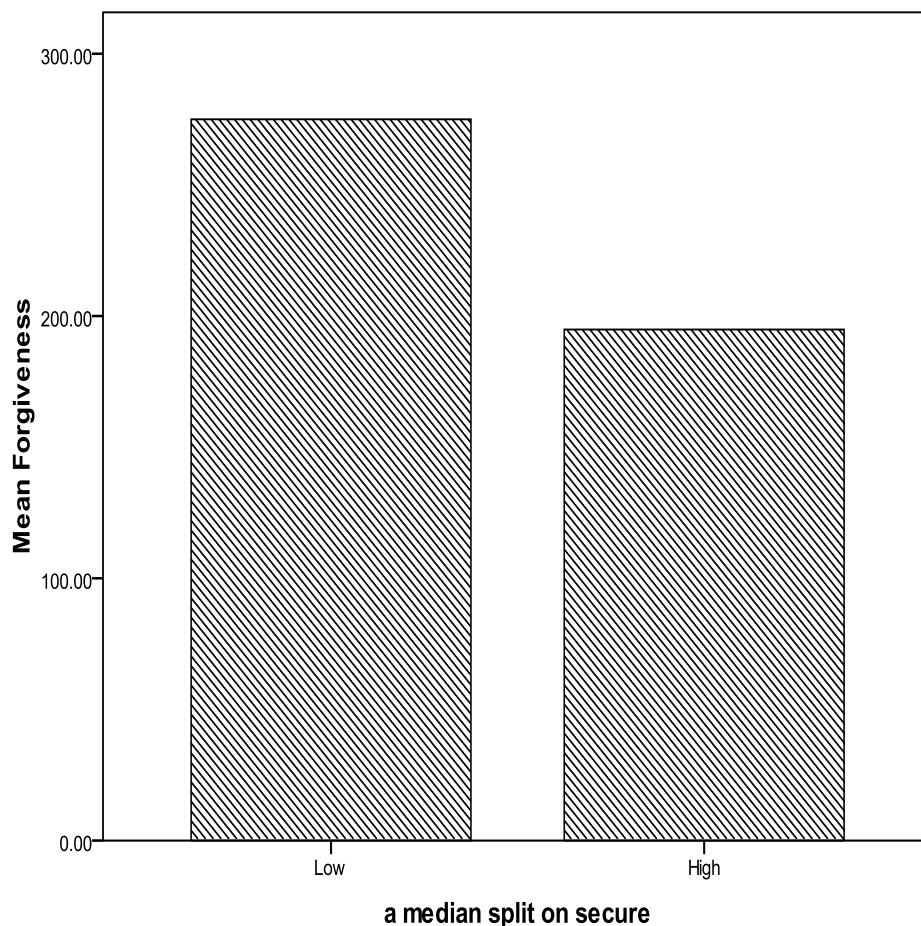


Figure1. Subjects low in Security (N= 1), subjects high in security (14)

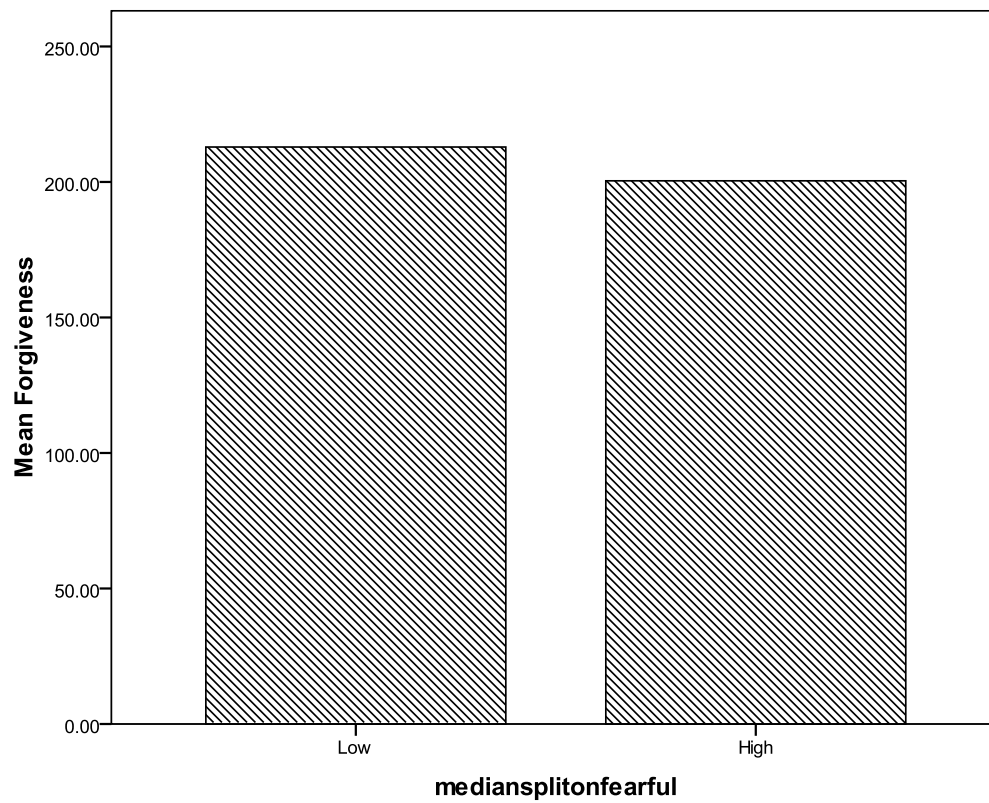


Figure2. Subjects low in Fearful (N= 10), subjects high in Fearful (14)

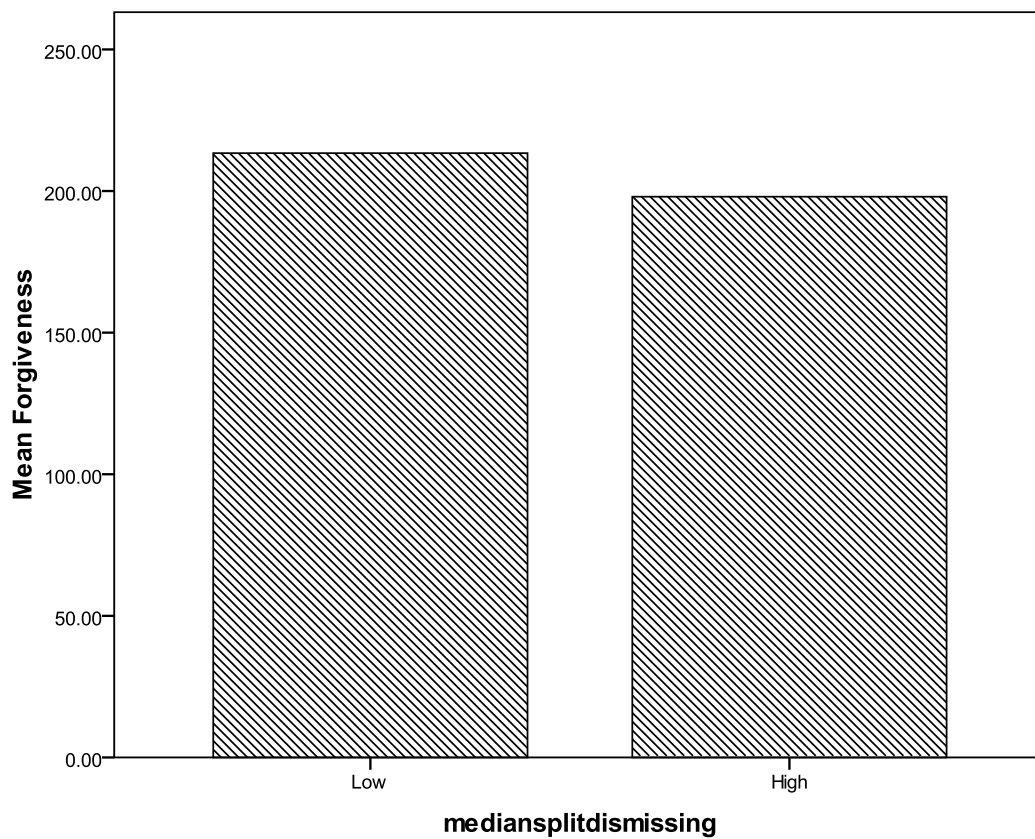


Figure3. Subjects low in Dismissing (N= 8), subjects high in Dismissing (14)

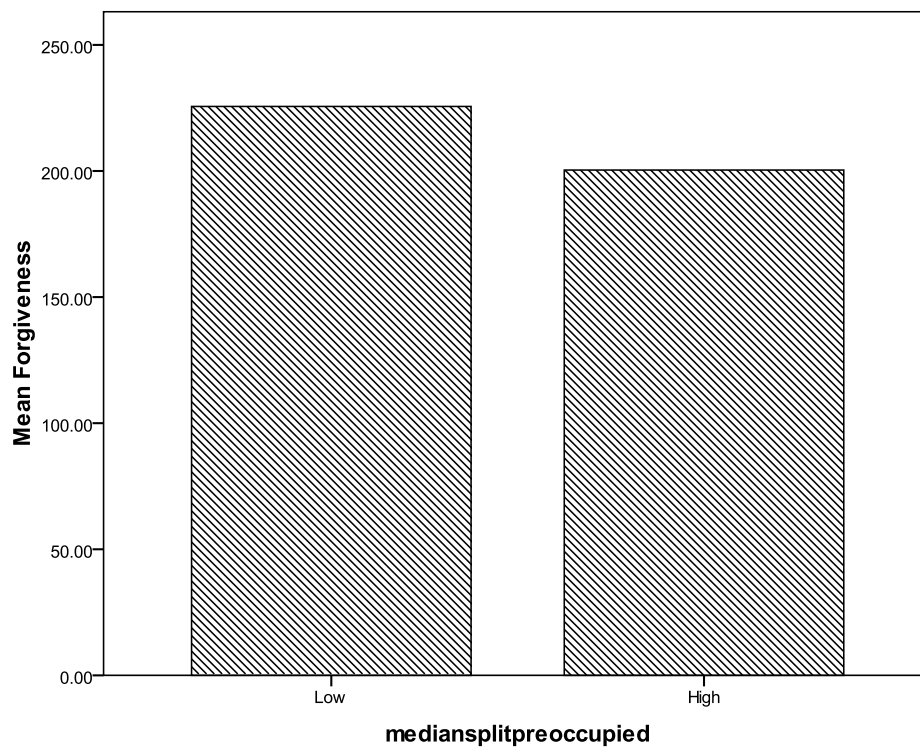


Figure4. Subjects low in Preoccupied (N= 5), subjects high in Preoccupied (8)

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Citation: Patricia Enedudu Idoko. "The Prospective Relationship of Attachment Theory and Dispositional Forgiveness: An Exploration of a Somali Population in the United States" *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)*, vol 10, no. 3, 2023, pp. 1-13. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.20431/2349-0381.1003001>.

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